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STARK OPPOSES FUNDING CUTS TO HOUSING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

WASHINGTON - Today, U.S. Rep. Pete Stark (D-Fremont) voted against the spending bill for the Departments of Treasury, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, the District of Columbia, the judiciary, general government and related agencies. It passed the House by a vote of 405-18. Stark's statement follows:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise against H.R. 3058, the Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, the District of Columbia, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Act, 2006, because it shortchanges critical needs of the most vulnerable Americans while continuing to make room for tax breaks for millionaires and our unwinnable quagmire in Iraq.

"This bill eliminates funding for the Housing and Urban Development Brownfields program, and Youthbuild. It cuts funding for the successful HOPE VI public housing redevelopment program by over \$80 million and for Community Development grants by \$250 million.

"The Brownfields program helps cities redevelop abandoned and underused industrial sites. Youthbuild allows unemployed young people aged 16 to 24 work toward their high school diploma while building housing for low-income people and the homeless.

"All of these programs could have been fully funded for \$430 million more, or about the cost of three days of the Iraq occupation. I will not vote to deny a high school diploma to an underprivileged youth who's willing to build housing so that Halliburton can waste more than \$1 billion, including charges for 10,000 meals never served, \$152,000 in "movie library costs," and \$1.5 million for tailoring.

"A Democratic colleague of mine wrote an amendment to reverse these cuts by reducing the 2006 tax break for individuals making more than one million dollars by a mere \$9,000. But the Republican Majority would not even allow a vote on the issue. Perhaps a direct vote on their morally bankrupt priorities would have proved too uncomfortable.

"Finally, this bill continues the Republican Majority's pursuit of its right-wing social agenda against the citizens of the District of Columbia who have no voting representation in the federal

government. The bill bars the District from using any federal or local funds for needle exchange programs, which are proven effective in reducing the spread of HIV. It overturns the city's ban on handguns, blocks implementation of a medical marijuana program, prevents D.C. from forcing all insurers to offer full contraceptive coverage, and limits a woman's right to choose. Ironically, it also prevents the District government from lobbying for voting representation so it can avoid suffering the social experiments of the modern day Pharisees.

"While the bill could have been worse and funds some important programs, I cannot in good conscience support its misplaced priorities, and therefore I vote No."